



# The Teacher Effectiveness Initiative

## Overview

Teachers matter more to student success than any other factor inside our schools. The best textbooks, small class sizes, and the latest technology are all good things. But none of them have the same impact as teachers in determining whether our students will succeed academically.

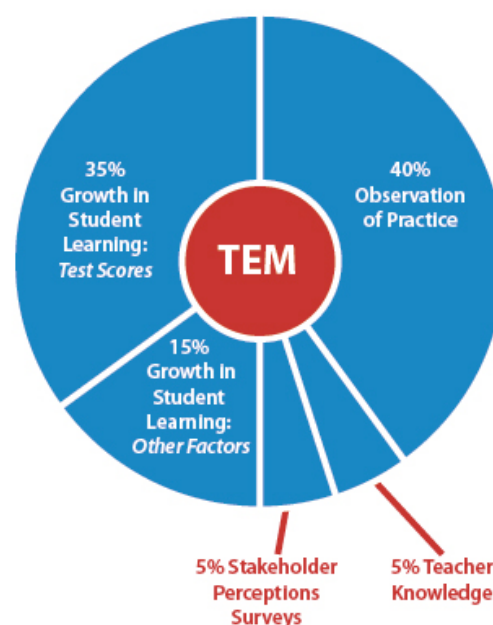
In partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Memphis City Schools has embarked on a major reform effort, the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative. The goal is to improve student outcomes by putting an effective teacher in every classroom, every day. Memphis has also earned the generous support of philanthropists, businesses, and nonprofits throughout the community. All of Memphis stands to gain by improving the education we offer our students, and we all have something to give.

Memphis' reform effort is driven by working groups largely comprised of MCS teachers and consists of four key strategies:

### 1. CREATE A COMMON, AGREED-UPON DEFINITION OF EFFECTIVENESS.

To increase effective teaching, we first define it, and then identify it. Our Credo explains the qualities that make for effective teaching. And the Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) is a fair, consistent, objective, and transparent process of evaluating teachers. Teachers have historically been evaluated through a single measure – observation by their principal. The TEM includes a more diverse set of measurement criteria that considers the whole teacher, creating multiple avenues for evaluating performance and ability, and identifying specific opportunities for professional development. These are:

- Growth in student learning
- Teachers' subject-matter knowledge
- Feedback from students and other stakeholders
- Four to six classroom observations.



TEM is not just a tool for evaluating teachers; it is also a process for continuous growth. TEM helps teachers and principals work together to strengthen the performance of all of our educators, and progress down a path of growth throughout the year.

## **2. MAKE SMARTER DECISIONS ABOUT WHO TEACHES.**

Our students deserve the best teachers Memphis can offer. MCS is taking several steps to ensure the young people of Memphis benefit from an empowered and effective group of educators, by:

- Recruiting and hiring top talent: With our improved hiring process, we can better attract and bring in new outstanding teachers.
- Working with partner groups to bring talented newcomers into Memphis' schools.
- Identifying high-performing teachers and offering them the recognition and rewards they deserve to keep them where we need them most: in the classroom.
- Raising the bar for tenure, and offering teachers guidance to navigate the process successfully.

## **3. BETTER SUPPORT, UTILIZE, AND COMPENSATE TEACHERS.**

We owe it to our teachers—and to our students—to ensure they receive the support and recognition they need to thrive. MCS is increasing the professional development offerings available to all of our teachers and the support systems they can use to improve their performance. We are creating new ways for our most effective teachers to share their talents—in front of the classroom and through mentoring their colleagues. The district is also looking into new compensation systems, to reward those teachers who are doing so much for our young people.

## **4. BUILD A CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS EFFECTIVE TEACHING.**

Yes, we are asking more of our teachers. But we are also asking more of our principals. Under the district's reform effort, we are training our principals to deliver more robust evaluations, with constructive and targeted feedback for their teachers. We also are working to put our high-performing school-level leaders in the low-performing schools that need them most.

Our students are pitching in to improve the learning environment, too, by serving as Student Envoys to get their peers excited about learning and participating in the classroom. We are also highlighting teaching as a profession in the public square. We want to engage the whole community in our work, improving our schools by focusing on supporting our most important asset – our teachers.

When we work together to support our teachers, we are supporting our students. And when we graduate more young men and women ready to take on college and the workplace, we build a better future—for all of Memphis.

**For more information on the reform efforts underway in Memphis:**  
email [TEI@mcsc12.net](mailto:TEI@mcsc12.net) or visit the MCS website at [www.mcstei.com](http://www.mcstei.com).